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[VI]

The Changing Life of the Shepherd

A year in Greece puts one on intimate terms with sheep and goats. They are everywhere. They dart across the highway before a speeding car and raise their tails in a contemptuous gesture as they leap to safety across the ditch into a field; they form a fitting part of almost every landscape one wants to photograph; and they provide the country's chief meat supply as well as the white *feta*, or soft cheese. Their wool and hides are also important sources of income to the shepherds.

There is nothing particularly glamorous about the Balkan sheep of which those in Greece are typical. They have a narrow, long tail and wool mixed with hair. C. S. Stephanides in his article, "Sheep — Man's Best Friend in Greece," writes: "The Greek sheep has a small skeleton; narrow body; short but strong legs, well-fitted for long journeys; the ability to feed on poor roughage, to withstand hardship; and early maturity." There are eleven leading breeds, seven of these being island sheep, which give much more milk, meat, and wool than the mainland sheep.[1] This is explained by the isolation of the islands, the comparative small acreage of some, and the poverty of the farmers there which forces them to keep but a few sheep and to select out the very best. The superiority of their livestock has come about through centuries of such selection. As a matter of fact, those mainlanders undertaking scientific improvement of their flocks import the island sheep for breeding purposes.

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1
Peloponnesos
[Shepherds]

621 669 [778] crimes of the Communist guerrillas in the late 1940s, according to the people, was their willful mutilation by bullets of some of the church's prized icons of the Virgin and saints.

233 427 241 [511] Even when their houses are repaired and a new school is built as a result of a gift by former Valtetsi residents now in the United States, the problems of the people will not be solved. Every year they find it more difficult to locate grazing land for their flocks on the plains below, and they cannot get back to their prewar standard of living unless they can double or treble the number of their sheep. One complained: "The different owners down below are putting in crops on the land that used to lie fallow. They ask more money if we increase the size of our flocks. Since I had trouble with the man from whom I have been renting in the past near Kranidi, this year I went to Messenia instead. I made arrangements with a farmer to bring my flock there, paid him in advance, but when I got there with my sheep he had plowed the land promised to me and had planted potatoes. He had even plowed beneath the olive trees so that there was no grass for my sheep. I could only pasture one month there, lost the money I had paid in advance, and had to come back to Valtetsi ahead of schedule to get pasture for my flock."

233 ●234 511 [221] Other shepherds in the Peloponnesos are saying the same thing. Some, with whom we talked on the road from Kalamata to Megalopolis, were anxious to get to their home villages in the mountains. They were carrying their milk- and cheese-making equipment with them, but their women and children had gone on ahead to get the houses ready for summer occupancy. One man complained: "I haven't been able to make ends meet although I have two hundred sheep and have sold four thousand okas of milk. The pasture didn't grow because of the dry weather and I had to buy fodder for my animals."

233 474 We found some of the men working with others in partnerships termed *sebries*. One variety of sebria calls for a shepherd to look after and maintain the flock of another for three years. The losses and profits are equally shared. After the three-year time limit is up, each sebros (partner) takes by lot half of the common flock. If the cooperation comes to an end before the expected time limit, the division is made differently; that is, if it lasted for two years, the flock is divided into three parts and each partner takes one part; the third part is divided, two thirds to the man who owned the flock originally and one third to the shepherd. If it lasted one year, the owner receives five sixth and the shepherd one sixth of this third part. Another variation of the sebria was the pooling of animals by the owners into a flock which they jointly managed as a common flock and whose products they distributed in a proportion equal to the number of sheep contributed to the flock. This arrangement is made if the pasture land is too large for one man to manage. But even such cooperative arrangements

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do not go far toward meeting the basic economic issues faced by the shepherd today.

As we talked with these shepherds, all of them dressed shabbily in patched trousers and coats and none of them in the traditional white kilt (*foustanella*), I realized again the inexorable push of social change. Americans by the hundreds in Greece were diligently and intelligently teaching Greek farmers how to improve their agricultural methods, how to make use of fallow land without losing its fertility, and even encouraging the plains farmers to keep more sheep or cows of their own for milk production. But to the degree that these sensible, reasoned programs succeed, to that extent the shepherds of the mountain villages face what we call in impersonal terms "occupational displacement."

These were my thoughts as I reflected on the experience of my acquaintances in Valtetsi and the shepherds from other Peloponnesian villages with whom I talked at many roadside stops. As background for their hesitant but sincere discussion of their problems is the recollection of the natural setting for our conversations: the brilliant bloom of wild flowers, the blue flax blossoms, the tender new green of the mulberry trees, the leaves pushing out from the gray fig trees standing in terraces on the mountainside, and the vineyards and olive groves stretching out far below, with the shimmering indigo sea off in the distance. Close at hand the earth looked stony and inhospitable to growing things, but always at a little distance the springtime colors caught the eye and made one glad to be in Greece. Now and then I found the shepherds themselves appreciatively viewing the scene around them while keeping a careful watch over their dusty, weary sheep which still had many miles ahead before reaching the succulent summer pastures. I had a feeling that these men on the move would be the first to agree that transhumance in the Peloponnesos, though beset with many problems and facing a clouded future, still had its compensations in the serene beauty of the land through which they walked.

The "Nomads" of Epirus

I had no idea when I left the Peloponnesos and its sheep-filled roads that a month later I would be encountering the same kind of migration in Epirus, the rugged and legendary northwestern province of Greece.

There was one important difference between the shepherds whom I met in Epirus and those in the Peloponnesos. The latter, such as the people of Valtetsi, had been bona fide Greek rancher-peasants who just happened to live in mountain villages where transhumance was their basic adaptation to their environment. In Epirus the shepherds were "nomads," who from time immemorial have made their circuits through Albania, what is now Yugoslavia, southern Bulgaria, and Northern Greece.[4] They dress differently from the Greeks; their dwellings are very different; and some of them

1:Sanders Z-5 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece
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covered with homemade blankets. The necessary water cask was also there. As we sat in front of the tent, we saw a scene of unusual beauty. The sun, setting in a red splash behind the Albanian mountains, was reflected in the Aoos River flowing in a small stream through its broad gravel bed; off to our right, the town of Konitsa spread like a jeweled fan up the hill. When we stood to warm ourselves at the fire, we saw a three-quarter moon rising behind the black mountain which towered just behind the tents, the moonlight on its patches of snow. The smoke of the campfire, the dogs barking, the puppies and lambs romping in the tent, the occasional neighing of the hobbled horses, made a scene that was distinct from the usual Greek evening landscape. It was incredibly different in time, too, from the atomic age, although in space only a score of miles from the Iron Curtain and twenty-eight flying hours from New York.

Berates' daughter, Vasilike, had been engaged for two years to a boy whom she had never seen but who was picked out for her by her father. As the father phrased it, "the word is given." At this point in the conversation, flustered and greatly embarrassed, Vasilike went into the neighboring tent to make some sirupy coffee. When we asked our host if his people had a dowry system, he grunted and said: "Ten years ago women took only their household equipment as a dowry; now they've started giving flocks as dowries. This accursed custom of the dowry has come up to us from the cities." Later, while we were sipping the coffee Vasilike brought, one of the shepherd boys came to play his flute for us. Because this was Saturday, the women two tents down the line had all washed their hair, with the exception of one little girl who was even then doing so in a small, shallow oven pan. The others had gotten to the stage of having their hair plaited. We could hear them at it, laughing and talking. But as the time dragged on, as darkness came down, and the sheep had not arrived, a nervousness became apparent in the camp. Everyone was marking time, waiting for the sheep.

At long last, the tension broke as we heard the flocks come nearer. They arrived at 9:30, and the available men, six in all, began the milking. A barricade of saddles, firewood, and thistles had already been made in which there was a small opening. The men seated themselves, three on a side, at the opening. The sheep were driven slowly up to the opening, and as a ewe came through one of the men would grab her by the hind leg and then proceed to milk her. Here, as elsewhere in Greece, the women never milked the sheep, nor the men the goats, although extra hands would have shortened considerably the tedious job that extended far into the night.

After the milking was well under way, Vasilike put a frying pan full of strained milk on the fire to boil. She then brought us a bowl of this warm, rich liquid to eat with bread and cheese. The bread had been purchased along the way and was paid for by cash from the milk sold en route. While

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1
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[The Tselingata]

used for public works, especially for the operation of schools. All these accounts are regulated by the general assembly of the members of the union.

In my conversations with Berates, the visit to whom has just been described, I learned that he considered himself an architselingas. True enough, he owned most of the sheep, but he did allow the six men who worked for him to have flocks of their own, say fifty to sixty head, if they could get a start. One of his shepherds was assigned the task of keeping the records of milk production so that each one could have a share prorated on the basis of the number of animals in the common flock. Every six months Berates draws up a contract with those associated with him; he supervises the cheese production up in the highland pastures and even helps process the milk for some of the smaller owners who are not in position to set up their own plant.

Those who knew Epirus a generation or so ago tell of the great authority these chief shepherds had, each ruling in autocratic fashion his people and the area in which they were established. Should one of the shepherds associated with any of these chieftains become dissatisfied and want to move away, he found it impossible to attach himself to any other chief shepherd, for these men of position stuck together. In the days of turmoil and disorder early in this century, it was almost necessary for a small owner to be connected in some way with a leading figure who could protect him and represent him to outside authorities.[14]

The tselingata, from many accounts, were not necessarily based on kinship, though there were interesting examples of the group of relatives being so large that they formed a union by themselves. In such a case, age and generation would usually determine who had the authority and his word would carry great weight among the others.

Even today there are powerful chief shepherds. The mayor of the city of Egoumenitsa, along the Ionian Sea, was the head of the Petoules family which is run on the principles of the traditional tselingata. There are eighty members in the family and all of them obey him. In 1953 I was told that the Petoules family collectively owned from 12,000 to 14,000 sheep, in spite of the fact that on one day in 1948 the Communist guerrillas took 4,200 sheep from them. Although they owned sufficient land to graze at least 14,000 sheep, they were improving the pastures by sowing wild clover. The summer area alone added up to about 3,450 acres and the winter area was additional.

One official in describing this family said that in 1952 some of the governmental representatives in Ioannina were ordered by the central government to go to the head of the Petoules family and take some of the pasture land for the settlement of refugees who needed land. They expected trouble but were pleasantly surprised when the architselingas agreed to give the land and also went with them to select it. Two villages were constructed,

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tobacco is the only product they can raise due to the lack of additional land. I think this is the reason why the Mission sent somebody to do a study of the village in 1952" (personal communication).

Chapter VI. The Changing Life of the Shepherd

1. It is of interest to note the breakdown by products on a percentage basis for the total income from sheep. Figures for Greece are taken from C. S. Stephanides, "Sheep — Man's Best Friend in Greece," *Foreign Agriculture*, XII (July 1948), 153–155, as is the quotation about the characteristics of the Greek sheep used in the text of this chapter. Kentucky figures are from C. D. Phillips and J. L. Pearson of the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture.

	Greece	*Kentucky*
Milk and milk products	45.10	
Mutton	14.26	
Lamb	24.77	84.00
Wool	8.68	16.00
Hides	7.19	
	100.00%*	100.00%

2. Although this chapter is primarily concerned with some of the human factors in the small livestock industry, the table below will give some basic information for those interested in livestock numbers and products. These data are based on official Greek Ministry of Agriculture figures.

Total Number of Sheep and Goats, Greece (In Thousands)

Period	Sheep	Goats
1935–38 (average)	8,304	5,111
1938	8,139	4,356
1945	6,262	3,066
1946	7,228	3,462
1949	6,785	3,629
1954	8,738	4,643
1957 (estimate)	9,300	4,900

3. See P. J. Iliopoulos, *L' Attique au point de vue physique et économique* (Athens, 1951). Three other studies that deal with sheep production are: P. H. Kontos, *Dase kai ktenotrophia eis ten Hellada apo oikonomikes kai politikes apopseus* (Forestry and Livestock Production in Greece from the Economic and Political Aspect) (Thessalonike, 1932); G. D. Kyriakos, *E Ktenotrophia mas* (Our Livestock Industry) (Athens, 1941); V. Handziolos, *To Provlema tes ktenotrophias en Helladi* (The Problem of the Livestock Industry in Greece) (Athens, 1941).

4. The description of the three systems of grazing practices (Vlachs, village ranchers, and village farmers) is taken from the American Embassy, Athens, Report No. 1056 (February 29, 1952), p. 13.

5. The study of transhumance as a habitat adjustment is almost a field in itself and will not be tackled here. Suffice it to say that I recognize the difference geographers make between transhumance and nomadism. Nevertheless, in the next section on the "nomads" of Epirus, I have followed conventional practice in thus alluding to these people, although most of them may actually be practicing transhumance rather than nomadism.

6. An interesting source in this connection is Jovan Cvijic's *La Péninsule balkanique, géographie humaine* (Paris, 1918). This was published in French before it

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According to his expense accounts he produced 85% of food stuffs and almost all of his seed. This shows how self sufficient the farmer of Megali Vrisi is and if he raised his vegetables too, there would be very few food articles bought from the market. 241 511

This representative farmer experiencing the prosperous year of 1934 was able besides spending for construction of a stable and a well, to deposit in the bank 2,000 drs. so as to have them during the lean years. [454]

Government Subsidy of Wheat Production

During the twentieth century the governments of various countries have introduced certain methods to regulate production, consumption and export. Some of these principles have had temporary successes and some others have failed. These governmental controls have in many instances created social changes and economic difficulties. The adoption of one crop enterprise and the creation of leisure seasons due to prohibition of certain other crops have made it difficult for the farmers to fit themselves in the new scheme of life. By subsidizing the wheat crop and fixing its market price the government has persuaded the farmers to plant only /55/ wheat and neglect rotation and other crops. 241 461 [654] [435]

Wheat being a seasonal crop provides ample leisure time for the farmer and thus ample spending periods. He is unable to find anything to occupy his time for something productive and useful in his occupation. Thus many people during the winter months leave the village for outside work. The girls in most cases find work in tobacco districts and the men in road construction. The conditions under which the girls and the men work are very poor and unhealthy, many returning home with poor health. It is a big problem with one crop farming to find something to absorb the leisure time of the farmers. [464] [499] [466]

The few experiments which were conducted in cooperation with the farmers of raising irrigated alfalfa and vetch and the introduction of dairy farming threw a hopeful light on what could be done to intensify agriculture so as to absorb all the available labor. [246] [234]